2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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The rule about physical fitness is now merely an ideal and, similarly, 643 762 731
ritual suicide is not conceived to have any relation to the welfare of the country. People do not say that the country will suffer if the physical powers of the queen fail. But ritual suicide does elevate the queen to a divinity; only by her act, not because of susceptibility to the weaknesses of man, can she die. Age neither increases nor decreases her powers. She is the 'soil'; her death 'heals' or 'dries up' the soil in the double sense of defiling it (as twins do) and scorching it (as the sun does); and as they phrase it, the 'country dies with its owner'. Consequently, after the queen's death, famines come, cattle and people succumb, and many flee the country. When Mujaji II committed suicide in 1894, there followed the *matshona*, the three years of unprecedented drought and pests, during which, according to contemporary European observers, practically all the cattle and a third of the population died. After the death of Mugɔdɔ, likewise, there was a great famine. The only other famine vividly recorded by tradition was during the reign of a chief who, being a usurper, was unable to make rain. Though the death of a chief presages death of the country, there is no great hurry to appoint a new queen. To the unfolding of a plan that guarantees abundance, immediate needs, even the need for the life-giving rain, must be subordinated.

For an account of succession to the throne we have to rely upon the 643 762
memories of men who were adults forty-five years ago. The practical and the ideal are confused in their minds. The generalized account we give is thus not specifically related to the death of Mujaji II unless otherwise indicated. Shortly before her death, the queen calls together her great men, sits silently looking at them for a while, and then retires to her hut. She will not see again the young boys who have gone to the *vudiga*. Long before this, Mujaji II and her inner 'council' had named the daughter of Leakhali, who was her 'sister' and great wife, as successor; she had driven both mother and daughter with their brothers from the country, but was secretly receiving and instructing the daughter. None but a small circle of close relatives knew of these arrangements; and a little later she took poison (*khitaba*) [278] in which the fatal ingredients are said to be the brain and spinal cord of the crocodile. There is a rule that the killer of a crocodile is for ever debarred from entering the capital, a prohibition patterned [784] upon the taboos against bringing into a village the wood of trees with which shrines and protective charms (*dithugula*) are made, for these trees 'reveal', and so render useless, what they create. The poison is not conceived to kill instantaneously; the queen dies in the presence of those who know the secrets, but the death is not made public. Those who pass the royal hut still greet her; even cases are still submitted as if for her final decision. Deception of the people is the aim emphasized in descriptions and in phraseology. In the old days many cattle were killed 'to deceive the people', but neither this killing, which provided at least for the funeral feast and the skin for the dead body, nor the other arrangements, had this function only. The spirit of the deceased continues, as it were, to preside over the country and no one could take over the reins 643 766
of government.

The body decomposes, it is ritually rubbed (*hu fɔrɔla*) to remove skin 789

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physical imperfections, not susceptible to the ills that befall ordinary men; that she cannot die a natural death but departs only by her own volition; that succession to the throne is uncertain since the choice of a ruler must in the last resort be made by the spirits of the tribe; that though she may not have a husband, lest political control become concentrated in him, yet she must bear the heir by a secret consort (a royal classificatory brother) specially chosen to maintain untarnished the purity of the royal blood; that she ensures the regularity of nature and the changing of the seasons; and, more particularly, that her death dislocates the rhythm of nature, bringing drought and famine, the abrogation of law and order. People today still speak with horror and fear of the years (1894–6) following the death of the previous queen, Majuji II. They were years, as we know from documentary sources, when drought, locusts, rinderpest and, in their wake, unprecedented famine and desolation, wiped out practically all the cattle and perhaps a third of the human population.

The preservation of the queen's sanctity requires that her life be subject to observances which shield her from the public eye and restrain her movements. She is 'the huckster in the hut' (*mushava-ndoni*) who sells her rain-medicines from the seclusion of her abode, and may not move about freely or leave the district of the capital. She was the only chief in the Union who, a few years ago, could not go to the Native Commissioners' Office to exercise the vote of her people in the election of a representative to the Native Representative Council. She cannot attend large assemblies of men, and is generally inaccessible except to her close relatives and great councillors. But otherwise her activities are not restricted, nor is her life a continuous ritual and, unlike other Divine Kings, there are no elaborate safeguards surrounding her every movement.

Tradition decrees that chiefs may have no physical defect, but not that they must die while still young and strong. Ritual suicide of the queen is by Lovedu conceptions not a means of guaranteeing a timely death lest failure of physical powers should upset the regularity of nature, but rather a symbol of her divinity, for it proves that she is not heir to the weaknesses of ordinary man. It is mystically connected with the fourth circumcision school in her reign: she must see the boys going in but not coming back. The Lovedu queen is believed to be immune from disease, but age does not diminish—it even increases—her mystical powers over nature. The only disqualification to rule is inability to make rain in the early period of her reign. Once she has demonstrated, by her ability to make rain, that the rain-charms have been entrusted to her and that she has been divinely chosen, irregularities in the seasons are attributed not to weakness of her powers but to some extraneous factor, such as contraventions of rules associated with keeping the country cool, disobedience to the chief, and the anger of the ancestor spirits.

Arrangements connected with succession of a new queen also emphasize her mystical relations with the cosmic order. The death of her predecessor

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institutions or their inadequacy for meeting all situations. In the resolution of difficulties of this nature arbitration and compromise play an important role, both judicially and extra-judicially. The genius of the legal system even in its most formal aspects is the skilful use of the restitutive sanction, in its spiritual rather than its material sense. The fundamental objective is the re-establishment of relations that have become broken or strained, and that objective is achieved, not so much by vindicating rules as by reconciling the parties. There is indeed a tacit assumption that the social equilibrium will be maintained if personal relations are suitably adjusted. The primary task of the courts is therefore to smooth out personal difficulties rather than to settle legal issues. For in law as in life it is not the rule that is important but the personal and social relations. The cattle-linking of brother and sister from different 'houses', ordinarily disapproved, is an arrangement that agreement between the 'houses' makes possible, and if the parties agree, even murder can be compounded. Even when a diviner has found a man guilty of witchcraft, it is felt to be necessary that the culprit should 'agree' with the findings, i.e. accept the verdict of the bones. In judicial proceedings a defendant will be asked if he agrees to pay the award; if he disagrees, full latitude is allowed him to expostulate. Should the court sense a genuine grievance it will reopen the case and bring its decision more into line with an amicable adjustment. As laws and institutions exist for human beings, they are not ends in themselves, and even the most fundamental duties and obligations between individuals and groups are conditional upon the ever-invoked 'if they agree'. If people do not agree there can be no relationship. If they have to be coerced there cannot be genuine agreement. This is why the execution of a judgement is left to the parties. The whole social and political structure relies upon the maintenance of good relations without resort to compulsion. Hence the use of the mechanisms of marriage and bride-price to hold in willing allegiance a great diversity of alien groups, who outnumber the Lovedu proper by nine to one; hence also the aversion from regimentation and military discipline.

Great importance is attached to the dignity of the individual. Every person has rights and obligations; even a child's rights to property are respected. If a man feels that he is not being given his due, it is right to complain (*velacla*) just as the ancestors do when they have not received proper attention. Any indignity to the personality, such as corporal punishment, is socially disapproved. Perhaps it is for this reason that a Lovedu soon becomes tractable if ordered by the court to carry stones or perform some other useless task when he has been guilty of 'despising' the court.

Suicide is not common, but when it is resorted to it is as a protest against wrongful accusations or as a result of the complete frustration of an individual forced against his will into an impossible situation, e.g. a girl forced to marry someone she dislikes.

A high value is placed on human life. An aspect of Western civilization that puzzles the Lovedu is that we tolerate the loss of human life involved